



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release DECEMBER 31, 1959

DUCK SEASON TO BE UNCHANGED

The Fish and Wildlife Service of the Department of the Interior announced today that it has decided not to recommend an early closing of the duck season where birds are in short supply, as announced recently, and has likewise recommended disapproval of proposals to extend the season in States which have large numbers of birds in contrast to the general pattern.

As a result of vagaries of migration, caused by weather and supplies of food, it is not uncommon for the duck distribution pattern to shift from year to year within a flyway, the Department stated. Thus, scattered States can have more birds compared to the previous year even with the over-all population down sharply.

In addition, this year there apparently may have been an additional shift of adult birds between flyways. Already, early band returns show a substantial increase in returns from the western flyways of ducks banded in the regions that normally contribute the birds to the Mississippi Flyway. One possible explanation of this shift is that birds which last spring were forced north by drought on the prairies may have joined more westerly flights this fall.

"When you have a shortage of birds generally, it's not good conservation to permit in a few places an increased kill of birds needed to repopulate the nesting grounds for a wider area," commented D. H. Janzen, Director of the Service's Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife.

Director Janzen again pointed out that age ratios of birds shot this fall clearly show that 1959 duck nesting success was very low, and the hunting this year is mostly on the basic breeding stock. That's why there had to be tighter restrictions on hunting to protect an adequate portion of that stock for another year, it was explained.

"Everything we have seen to date has substantiated our summer survey forecast of a substantial decline in the fall duck flight. However, we will not know the exact degree of the population drop until the winter waterfowl inventory has been conducted and we have had a chance to study the kill data supplied by duck hunters in all parts of the country," concluded Mr. Janzen.

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